

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-10 PA-04 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 SAJ-01

DRC-01 /138 W

----- 051127

R 221856Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7306

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: HEATH-TUC TALKS - THE END OF THE END
OF THE ROAD?

REF: (A) LONDON 659; (B) LONDON 720

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER
HEATH AND TUC LEADERS YESTERDAY EVENING (JANUARY 21)
ENDED, LIKE HIS PREVIOUS MEETING WITH THEM ON JAN. 14
(REF A), WHICH FAILED TO RESOLVE THE INDUSTRIAL CRISIS.
THE SCENE NOW SHIFTS FROM THE TUC TO THE NUM - THE
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STORM CENTER OF THE CRISIS - AMIDST THREATS FROM THE

NUM TO ESCALATE ITS OVERTIME BAN, PERHAPS TO A FULL SCALE STRIKE. END SUMMARY

2. THE TUC-HEATH MEETINGS YESTERDAY FLOUNDERED ON THE SAME REEF AS BEFORE. THE TUC REITERATED ITS PLEDGE -- NOW BACKED BY THE FULL WEIGHT OF ALL ITS AFFILIATES (REF B) -- THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT SETTLED WITH THE MINERS OUTSIDE STAGE THREE TUC AFFILIATES WOULD NOT USE THE SETTLEMENT AS A BASIS FOR THEIR OWN CLAIMS. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT AGREE TO THIS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE TUC IS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE STRONGER GUARANTEES THAT ITS AFFILIATES WOULD NOT MAKE CLAIMS OUTSIDE OF STAGE THREE.

3. THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL IS MEETING TOMORROW (JAN 23) TO DISCUSS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, BUT IT IS THE NUM ONCE AGAIN WHICH IS AT THE CENTER OF THE STAGE. THE PRIME MINISTER REPORTEDLY TOLD THE COMMONS TODAY (JAN 22) THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE NOW RESTED WITH THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD DONE EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO MAKE POSSIBLE A SETTLEMENT, AS HAD THE TUC, AND THAT HE HOPED THAT THE NUM WOULD RECOGNIZE THIS FACT.

4. AN OFFICIAL OF THE NUM TOLD US THAT THE NUM SPECIAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE MEETS TOMORROW AFTERNOON TO HEAR, INTER ALIA, REPORTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OVERTIME BAN. THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED ON THURSDAY MORNING (JANUARY 24) BY A MEETING OF THE NUM EXECUTIVE TO DECIDE ITS NEXT STEPS. HE SAID THAT THE NUM EXECUTIVE WILL DISCUSS VARIOUS WAYS TO INTENSIFY THE OVERTIME BAN, INCLUDING A REDUCED WORK WEEK OF THREE OR FOUR DAYS.

5. HE EXPECTS, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE PRESENT MOOD OF THE LEADERSHIP, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE EXECUTIVE WILL RECOMMEND A STRIKE BALLOT, WHICH COULD TAKE UP TO THREE WEEKS, ALTHOUGH THIS PROCESS COULD BE SPEEDED UP TO ABOUT TWO WEEKS. (THUS FAR, HE SAID, THERE HAD BEEN NO CALL FOR A MEETING FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALTHOUGH THAT COULD COME LATER.) HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S COAL STOCK SITUATION WAS BY NO MEANS DESPERATE AND COULD POSSIBLY SEE IT THROUGH TO THE SPRING, BUT HE WARNED THAT "THIS WOULD NOT BE TRUE FOR NEXT WINTER." HE ALSO NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT IT IS BECOMING EXTREMELY DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO SECURE COAL STOCK FIGURES FROM THE COAL BOARD.

6. TUC LEADERS EXPRESSED STRONG DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE FAILURE OF THE TALKS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. THE WEARY TUC GENERAL SECRETARY, LEN MURRAY, STATED ON BRITISH TELEVISION LAST NIGHT THAT HE WAS VERY SORRY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TURNED DOWN THE TUC OFFER AND "THAT SEEMS TO BE THAT." ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY NORMAN WILLIS TOLD US THAT MANY OF THE TUC LEADERS REMAINED CONFUSED ABOUT GOVERNMENT MOTIVATIONS IN THIS MATTER, AND ARE NOT CLEAR ABOUT THE NEXT ACT IN THE DRAMA.

7. DAVID BASNETT, A TUC LEADER WHO WAS PRESENT DURING

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THE TALKS WITH HEATH, TOLD US THAT, IN HIS ANALYSIS, THE GOVERNMENT "HAD GONE IN FOR OVERKILL ON THE THREE-DAY WEEK WHICH THEY ASSOCIATED WITH THE MINERS' DISPUTE." HE ADDED THAT "NOW, HOWEVER, SINCE THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO RETURN TO THE FIVE-DAY WEEK (THEY HELD PRELIMINARY TALKS WITH THE TUC ON THIS QUESTION) THEY ARE TRYING TO ISOLATE THE MINERS' DISPUTE." BASNETT BELIEVES THAT THE TUC OFFER "IS NOW AS GOOD AS DEAD."

8. COMMENT: ONCE AGAIN - ONLY A MINOR MIRACLE - COULD BRING A PEACEFUL CONCLUSION TO THE INDUSTRIAL
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CRISIS. BUT THE SITUATION SEEMS TO BE HARDENING INSTEAD, NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF THE CENTRAL DISPUTE IN THE COAL INDUSTRY, BUT ON THE RAILROADS AS WELL (A MEETING OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL UNIONS INVOLVED IN THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY FAILED TO AGREE TODAY ON HOW THE RAIL DISPUTE MIGHT BE RESOLVED.) THERE IS OBVIOUSLY CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY ON THE TRADE UNION SIDE -- AS ELSEWHERE -- ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVATION, IN POLITICAL OR IN ECONOMIC TERMS. THE NEXT FEW DAYS MIGHT HELP TO CLEAR THE AIR IN THIS REGARD.

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